

Liberty Fuel Company, Mine Office  
Old Latuda Townsite  
Spring Canyon  
Standardville vicinity  
Carbon County  
Utah

HAER No. UT-52

HAER  
UTAH,  
4-STAVI.V,  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
Rocky Mountain Regional Office  
National Park Service  
U. S. Department of the Interior  
P. O. Box 25287  
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

Liberty Fuel Company, Mine Office

HAER No. UT-52

HAER  
UTAH  
4-STAVI.1  
1-

Location: SW/SE/NE/SE Section 7, T13S-R9E  
At the western end of the Old Latuda townsite in Spring Canyon, one mile northwest of Standardville, and about 5 miles west of Helper, in Carbon County, Utah

UTM: 12.504200E.4394910N  
Quad: Standardville, 7.5'

Date of Construction: ca. 1920

Present Owner: John, Nick & Gene S. Pappas  
856 N. 3rd E.  
Price, Utah 84501

Original Use: Coal Mine

Present Use: Abandoned

Significance: The mine office is associated with events that have made significant contributions to the broad patterns of our history, i.e., early 20th century coal mining in Utah and the western United States. The mine office is an integral part of the overall Liberty Fuel mine operation in Spring Canyon, one of the most successful and prolonged mining ventures in the district. Coal mining was the chief influence in the settlement and development of Carbon County. The building displays the craftsmanship of Italian stone masons, using locally-quarried sandstone, the most important architectural influence of this district. Despite acts of vandalism, the site retains integrity of setting and sufficient physical integrity to convey feeling and association with its period of historical significance.

Historian: Robert G. Rosenberg, Historical Consultant  
A. Dudley Gardner, Principal Investigator  
Western Wyoming College

August 1988

## I. HISTORY

The Liberty Mine was first opened in 1914 by the Liberty Fuel Company. Preliminary work was conducted by Charles Leger, John Forrester, and Frank Gentry. The prime movers behind the Liberty Fuel Company were Frank Latuda and Frank Cameron. Frank Cameron was already a well-known coal entrepreneur who operated the Panther Mine at Heiner. Latuda, president of the company, was a native of Trinidad, Colorado, and related to Cameron. L. R. Weber was vice president and general manager. George A. Schultz was mine superintendent and remained in that position for 25 years. The company's main offices were located in Salt Lake City.<sup>1</sup>

In 1917, the mine began to ship coal. The Liberty Mine, as it was called, was located on the south slope of Spring Canyon, and the town of Liberty was located about one-half mile to the east, near the mouth of Robinson Gulch. The mine developed a coal seam 5-1/2 to 9-1/2 feet thick in the first sub-seam below the Castlegate coal floor in the Blackhawk Formation of the Mesaverde Group of the Upper Cretaceous Period. The mine was served by the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad, which had been built a branch line to Rains, west of Liberty, in 1915. Coal was initially sorted with a temporary bar screen. However, following World War I and the subsequent demand for better coal preparation, a small wooden three-track tippie was erected, with a shaker screen for preparing three commercial coal sizes. In 1927, the company replaced the wooden tippie with a modern steel four-track tippie.<sup>2</sup>

In 1919, the Liberty Mine, with a crew of 91 men, produced 170,847 tons of coal. In 1920, the total rose to 202,471 tons, with a work force of 136 men. The work force never expanded much above that figure and averaged 106 during the first 25 years of operation. Production varied with the fluctuating coal market. In 1924-1925, the production was 132,620 tons, and in 1925-1926, production rose slightly to 159,137 tons. As the country entered the Great Depression, Liberty Mine production actually increased, reaching 216,069 tons in 1928 and 334,941 tons from January 1, 1929 to June 30, 1930. This rise in production may have been due to the completion of the new steel tippie, completed in 1927. Manpower and production figures throughout the Depression reflect this increase. In 1934, the Liberty Mine had a crew of 82 men. From July 1, 1934 to June 30, 1937, the mine produced 125,901 tons; and from July 1, 1936 to June 30, 1937, the mine produced 135,875 tons. The Liberty Mine, then, was a relatively steady producer, considering the overall poor economic climate during the 1930s. As mine superintendent George Schultz concluded, "Consistency has been the word for this mine."<sup>3</sup>

The Latuda townsite was built by the company around 1918. It originally consisted of 20 houses for the employees. It was first known by the name

Liberty, but when a post office was established, the name was officially changed to Latuda. The town soon contained 400 people and was built in three long rows, stretching from east to west along Spring Canyon. Most of the houses were most one-story wood frame structures, lacking indoor plumbing until 1945. It is likely that the Liberty Fuel Company used readily available standardized coal camp building plans for constructing the Latuda living quarters. The company probably used its own employees to lay out and build the structures within the confines of Spring Canyon. However, no records or plans concerning the construction history of Latuda have been located. Although supervisory personnel tended to have more substantial residences, there was no well-defined hierarchy of housing based on ethnic or economic divisions. However, the small Japanese work force preferred to live apart near the mine and boarding house.

Unlike most company towns, Latuda did not have a company store. S. N. Marchetti maintained an independent store within the company town. According to Marchetti's nephew, Val Turri, Marchetti owned the land on which the Liberty Mine was developed. As payment for the land, the Liberty Fuel Company provided Marchetti with a store building and the right to operate it in the company town. Val Turri later maintained a tavern in the basement of his uncle's store. The post office was also located in Marchetti's store.<sup>4</sup> A school had been started in a company house in 1918, but in 1923 a large school was built at Latuda by the Carbon County School District that also served the neighboring mining towns.

The fine two-story cut sandstone mine office was built in 1920 on the western perimeter of the town near the mine. The building had a hipped roof, a second-story veranda, and twelve rooms. The first floor consisted of the mine office, the engineer's office, a drafting room, and a large concrete walk-in bank vault. There was also a doctor's office, with daily visiting hours for patients. The second floor consisted of living quarters for visiting mine officials from Salt Lake City. A Japanese chef named Freddie Matsumoto cooked for the visiting officials and maintained the rooms. In later years, Frank Latuda, Jr. lived upstairs, while working at the mine. The mine office remained in use until 1966, when the Liberty Mine closed and the portal was blasted shut by the company. It remained in good condition until 1972, when it was dynamited by a local youth who claimed to be killing the "white lady" who supposedly haunted the canyon and the office. The remainder of the building was subsequently gutted by fire, and today only the massive stone walls remain.<sup>5</sup> According to former residents, Latuda was a good place to live during the Depression, compared to neighboring towns. Although the mine sometimes operated only one day a week, the people were able to get by.

Because of their isolation, people interacted and entertained each other. Val Turri's tavern was the hub of social activity despite prohibition and periodic inspections by the State of Utah. Life in a company town included many mixed blessing, such as extensions on rent and credit at the store, even though it was an independently owned business. Credit was, of course, carefully recorded against a worker's paycheck. Over an extended period, his indebtedness could leave him with little freedom of choice. The Liberty Fuel Company appears to have been more enlightened than some of the other coal companies, in that it valued a steady work force with minimum turnover. Many families had two generations of miners who lived and worked at Latuda. The Latuda community consequently had a cohesiveness and sense of permanence not seen in many other coal towns of the region. These attributes, in addition to the mine's relatively steady production, enabled the Latuda community to endure the Depression years with a minimum of suffering, in comparison to other towns in the region and nationwide.<sup>6</sup>

Coal mining was a hazardous profession, but it paid better than most other manual labor jobs. Nevertheless, the company town system tended to bind a miner to both the camp and the mine. When the United Mine Workers of America organized the coal towns in the region in 1933, the hold of the company upon the worker was gradually broken, the scrip system was abandoned, and the miner received more benefits and fairer treatment. The transition to labor unions in 1933 was relatively peaceful in Spring Canyon. However, earlier unionizing attempts, most notably in 1922, often resulted in acts of violence, the use of scab workers and armed guards, and the arrival of the National Guard to quell the violence.<sup>7</sup>

Latuda had a broad ethnic diversity, as did all of the communities in Spring Canyon. Italian were the largest group, but there were also Swedes, Finlanders, and Slavs. There were apparently no Greeks at Latuda. There was a small Japanese contingent that lived apart from the town. Most were bachelors, but all were considered to be good workers and fine additions to the community. There appears to have been little resentment toward them until the outbreak of World War II. Servicemen from Latuda, home on leave, were sometimes bitter toward them, and some miners refused to work with them, even though they were producing coal for the war effort. Former residents of Latuda do not remember what actually happened to the Japanese miners, only that their number gradually diminished and were gone by the end of World War II. Only "Harry," the tracklayer, remained throughout the war, and he was considered an indispensable worker. Harry was later found dead in his cabin under mysterious circumstances.<sup>8</sup>

The Liberty Mine, like the other coal mines in Spring Canyon, prospered with the increased demand for coal during World War II. During the war,

During the war, a man could work six or even seven days a week. However, the end of the war brought about a decreased demand for coal. Alternative forms of home heating, in addition to the switch from steam to diesel engines by the nation's railroads, brought about the inevitable period of decline for Liberty. The mine closed for good in 1966. During its latter stages of operation, many of the miners lived in Helper or other communities and drove to work each day, and the rather unique character of the once-isolated town had long since changed. The Liberty Mine had become so extensive that haulage from the miles of underground workings had become an increasingly costly process. Unlike some of the other mines in Spring Canyon that are believed to contain extensive coal reserves, the Liberty Mine is described as being "mined out," with little chance of ever reopening. The town of Latuda was literally hauled away on trucks and railroad cars to other communities. Val Turri moved his home to Helper, where he still resides. The abandoned town now consists of only crumbled foundations and building sites. The Liberty Fuel mine office is perhaps the chief landmark remaining at Latuda and is now considered a hazardous structure.<sup>9</sup>

## II. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LIBERTY FUEL MINE AND TOWN

The Liberty Fuel mine office was not evaluated during the Class III cultural resource survey conducted in 1985 by Desert West Research, Salt Lake City, Utah. The Liberty Mine, the associated town of Latuda or Liberty, and the Liberty Fuel mine office are integral parts of the history of the Spring Canyon coal mining district, the greater Book Cliffs Coal Field, and the overall history of coal mining in the State of Utah and the western United States. "The demand for coal, more than any other influence, has determined the history of this [Carbon] county."<sup>10</sup> In terms of economic impact, the Liberty Mine produced a steady amount of coal and provided jobs for a work force of over one hundred workers from 1917 to 1966, when the mine closed permanently and the town was dismantled. During that time period, as many as 500 people made their home in the associated company town. The Book Cliffs Coal Field, of which the Liberty Mine was a part, produced approximately 75% of Utah's overall coal output into the early 1970s. Finally, Latuda boasted a rich ethnic heritage consistent with Carbon County as a whole. From 1880 to 1925, the great influx of foreign-born miners who came to work in the mines of Carbon County created a unique industrial "gentile oasis" surrounded by agrarian Mormon settlers.<sup>11</sup> Although the Mormon Church initially frowned on Mormons laboring in the coal mines, many worked in the mines during the winter months to augment their farming incomes. Second-generation Mormons often worked in the mines on a full-time basis after agricultural opportunities became more limited. Numerous Mormon businessmen became prominent in the mining industry in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The locally-quarried cut sandstone walls of the Liberty Fuel mine office are an example of the craftsmanship of Italian stone mason from the Tyrol section of northern Italy.<sup>12</sup> Their handiwork was once evident in numerous stone residences, commercial buildings, and mine support facilities throughout Spring Canyon. However, much of this fine work has been destroyed subsequent to the abandonment of the mines and associated communities. This stone masonry is the most important architectural contribution of this district and reflects an ethnic heritage unlike any other portion of Utah. The overall setting of the Liberty Fuel mine office has not been compromised by modern intrusions. Most of the nearby components of the mine and town are gone, and the mine office stands as a lone sentinel to mark the spot of substantial early 20th century mining community, where hundreds of miners and their families lived, worked, and sometimes died.

### III. SITE DESCRIPTION

Liberty Fuel Mine Office: Structure S-10 (SW/SE/NE/SE Section 7, T13S-R9E, template anchored in NW corner).

The Liberty Fuel Company mine office is located on the lower north side of Spring Canyon, east of the Liberty Mine and on the west edge of the old Latuda townsite. It rests on a level building site and faces south. Steep canyon walls rise above the site, just north of the structure. The Liberty Fuel Company built the structure in 1920 to house its mining office. Historic photographs reveal that the mine office was a full two-story stone building with a hipped roof and a covered front porch with second-story veranda and balustrade. Today, the structure is completely gutted and roofless, and only portions of the stone walls remain standing. This massive rectangular-shaped building is oriented on a north-northwest by south-southeast axis, rests on a poured concrete foundation, and measures 62 feet 8 inches east-west by 35 feet north-south. The walls are composed of locally-quarried cut sandstone laid in close fitting courses with pointed mortar.

Each elevation of the building is somewhat different. The south elevation consists of three evenly-spaced, seven-foot-high doorways with poured concrete lintels. They are flanked by large rectangular window bays, 6 feet 8 inches wide, with poured concrete lintels. The second-floor openings consist of one doorway and two rectangular window openings, similar to those on the first floor. There is also a smaller rectangular window opening. A third large rectangular window bay on the east end is partially collapsed. All have poured concrete sills and a continuous poured concrete lintel that runs the length of the wall. A large portion of the south elevation wall has collapsed near the southeast corner of the building. There are no longer any windows, wooden frames, door jambs, or any related hardware in any of the openings

on the first or second floors. The wooden timbers that once supported the second-floor veranda are still visible in the wall above the first-floor lintels, although it appears that they have burned. Outside the south elevation, there remains a poured concrete landing, running the length of the wall that served as the front porch deck. This deck is supported by cut sandstone walls. A set of concrete steps leads downward from the porch toward the black-topped road that runs in an east-west direction below the mine office.

The east elevation is complete and consists of one doorway flanked on the south by a large rectangular display-type window opening and on the north by a conventional rectangular window that nearly runs to floor level. These windows are matched vertically on the second floor, with window openings of the same dimensions. All openings have poured concrete sills and lintels. There are no remaining windows, wood frames, or related hardware in any of the door or window openings.

The west elevation is badly collapsed. On the first story, there is a centrally-located doorway and, to the north, two conventional rectangular window bays built to the height of the doorway. All have poured concrete lintels and sills. The configuration of the second story has been lost by the collapse of the wall. However, the poured concrete sills of three evenly-spaced openings can be discerned and are presumed to be window bays.

The north elevation has also partially collapsed. There is one large doorway that may have once accommodated twin or double doors near the center of the wall. To the west of this doorway is a small square opening probably used as a coal chute for feeding the furnace. There are two nearly-intact window openings near the northeast corner of the building, one on the first floor and one on the second floor directly above it. The first-floor window opening has partially crumbled. There are two, or possibly three, poured concrete sills remaining on the second floor that may have been window openings. However, the walls have crumbled and collapsed, destroying window configuration. All remaining openings have poured concrete sills and lintels, but no longer retain any windows, doors, wood framing, or associated hardware of any kind.

The interior of the structure consists of a concrete floor and a poured concrete walk-in vault built onto the north elevation. The vault has only one opening, a doorway framed with heavy metal. It has a flat poured concrete roof. A small basement boiler room is located directly west of the vault. A set of winding concrete stairs lead to the basement. A metal hopper to store and feed coal into the furnace is located due west of the boiler room. A brick chimney flue is partially built into the north elevation and is located in the northeast corner of



the boiler room. There are small square duct holes in the concrete floor for heat. The interior surface of the stone walls have been covered with a heavy layer of cement. There are no other details of importance in the interior of the building.

The Liberty Fuel mine office once had twelve rooms. The first floor consisted of the mine office, engineer's office, and a drafting room. Mine employees drew their pay here, accounting for the large walk-in vault. It appears that the east entrance may have given access to the doctor's office, also located on the first floor. The second floor was divided into living quarters. There may have been cooking facilities on the second floor.

The mine office was in good condition, even after abandonment. However, in 1972, the interior was dynamited. A subsequent fire gutted the interior and burned the roof. The remaining stone walls are considered hazardous. A portion of the south wall is particularly precarious, due to an unsupported section of wall suspended at the second floor level.

#### IV. FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> A. E. Gibson, "In the Coal Fields of Eastern Utah, Carbon and Emery Counties, Spring Canyon District, Carbon County," in Centennial Echoes From Carbon County, ed. Thursey Jessen Reynolds (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers of Carbon County, 1948), p. 228; Allan Kent Powell, The Next Time We Strike: Labor in Utah's Coal Fields, 1900-1933, Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1985), p. 25; Chuck Zehnder, A Guide to Carbon County Coal Camps and Ghost Towns (Helper, Utah: n.p., 1984), 24.

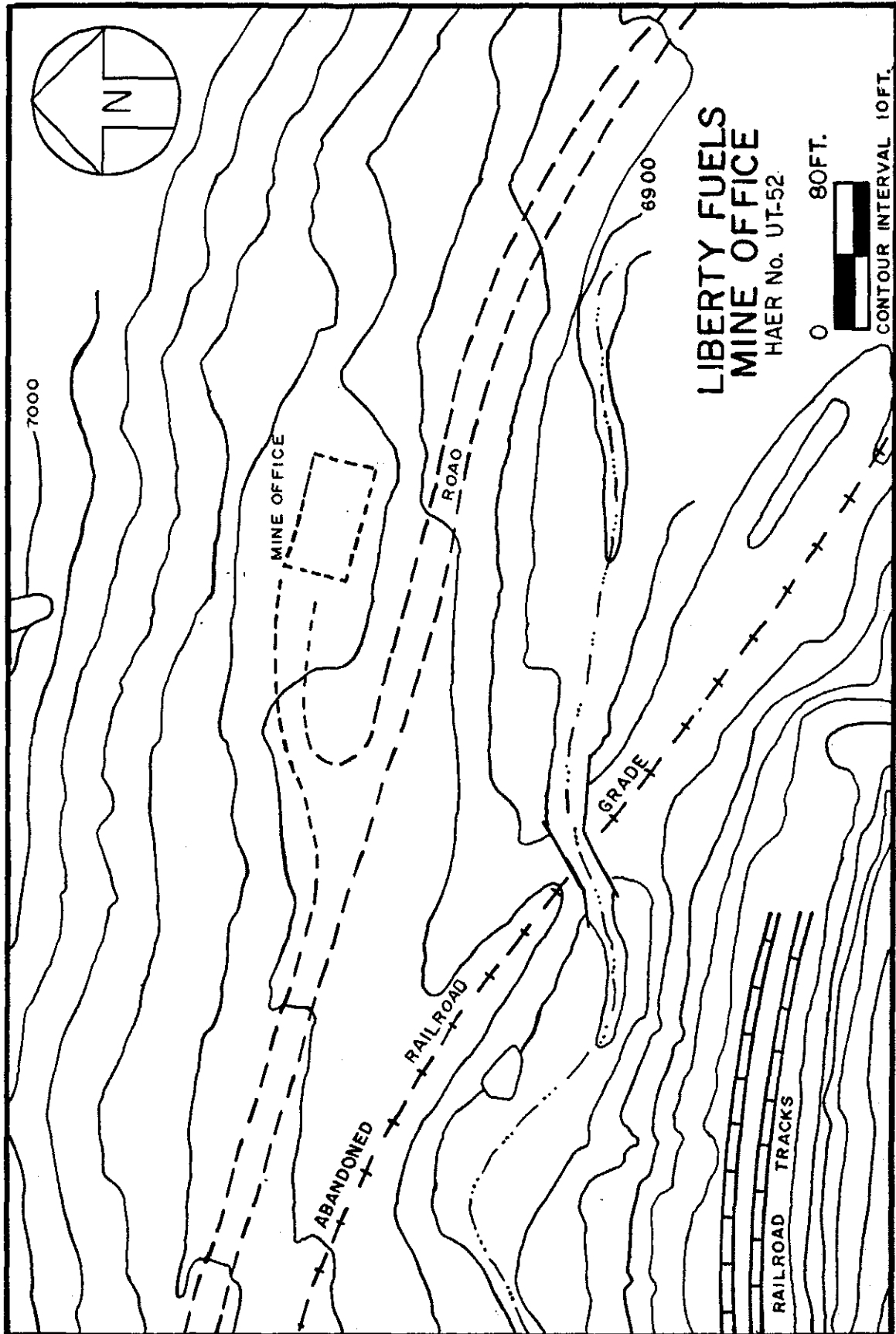
<sup>2</sup> D. T. Parker, "Safety Conditions in Liberty Mine, Liberty Fuel Company, Latuda, Utah," Department of the Interior, U. S. Bureau of Mines Information Circular No. 6812 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1934), pp. 1-2; C. A. Allen and E. M. Spieker, "Analysis of Utah Coals," U. S. Bureau of Mines Technical Paper No. 345 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1925), pp. 49-50.

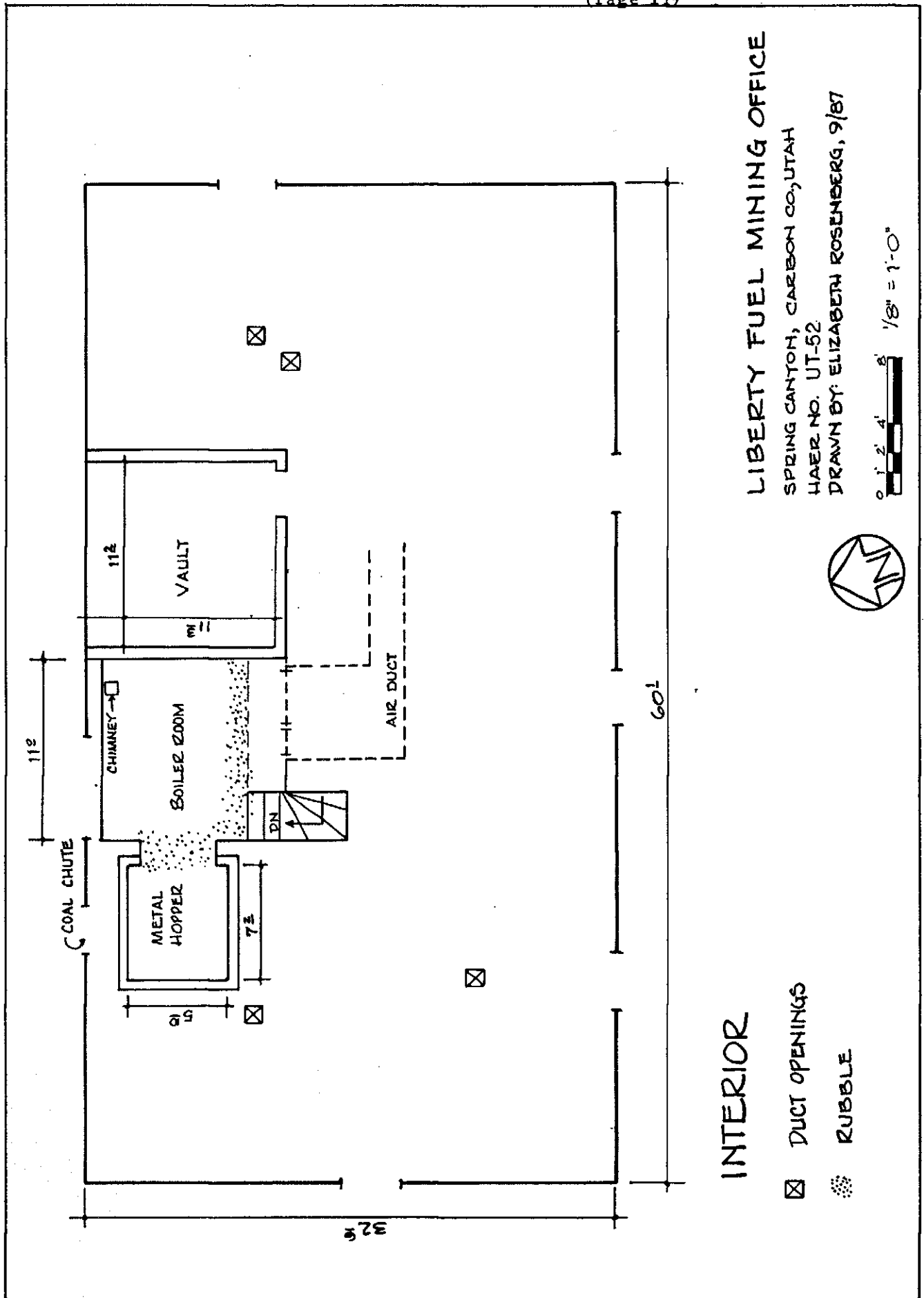
<sup>3</sup> Gibson, pp. 228-229; State of Utah, Report of the Industrial Commission, State Coal Mine Inspector's Report, 1926, p. 66; 1930, p. 52; 1936; 1938.

<sup>4</sup> Val Turri, personal communication, Helper, Utah, August 26, 1987; Zehnder, pp. 24-25.

<sup>5</sup> Val Turri, Richard Schultz, personal communication, Helper, Utah, August 22, 1987.

- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Powell, pp. 121-140.
- 8 Val Turri; Dick Schultz
- 9 H. H. Doelling, Central Utah Coal Fields: Sevier, Sanpete, Wasatch Plateau, Book Cliffs and Emery, Monograph Series No. 3 (Salt Lake City: Utah Geological and Mineralogical Survey, 1972), p. 350; Val Turri.
- 10 Floyd O'Neil, "Victims of Demand: The Vagaries of the Carbon County Coal Industry," in Carbon County: Eastern Utah's Industrialized Island, ed. Philip F. Notarianni (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1981), p. 36.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Allan Kent Powell, "Land of Three Heritages: Mormon, Immigrants, and Miners," in Carbon County: Eastern Utah's Industrialized Island, ed. Philip F. Notarianni (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1981), p. 9.

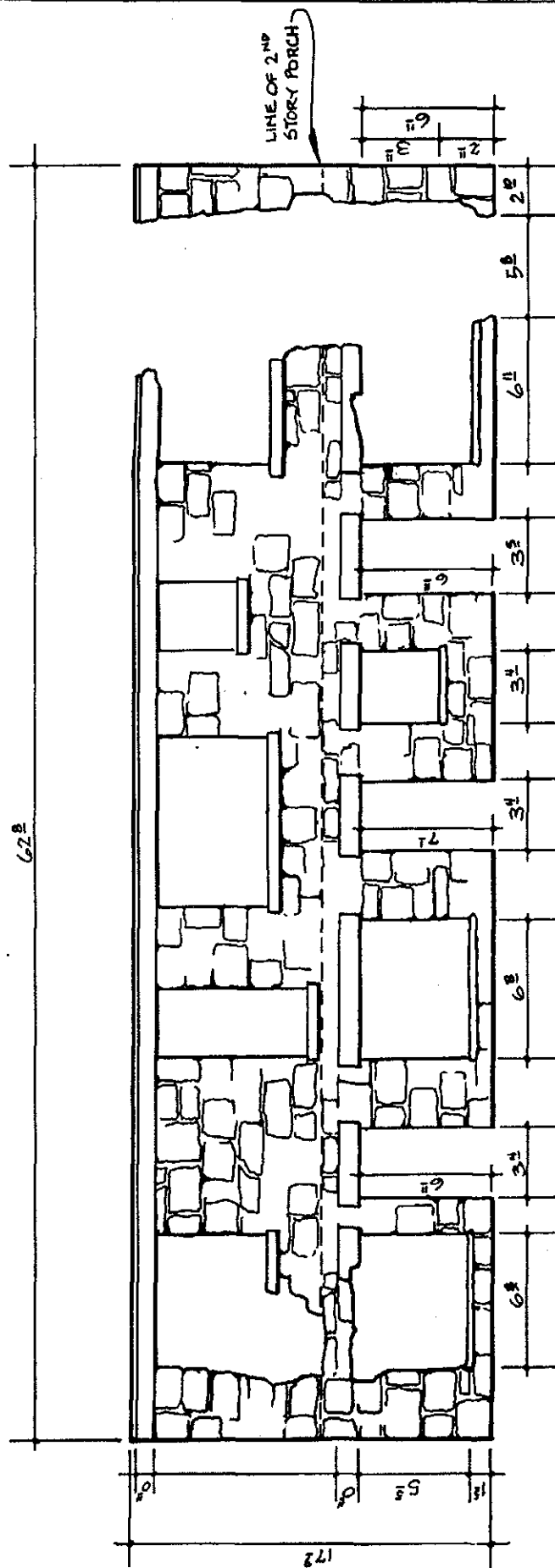




LIBERTY FUEL MINING OFFICE

SPRING CANYON, CARBON CO., UTAH  
 HAER NO. UT-52  
 DRAWN BY: ELIZABETH ROSENBERG, 9/87

0' 1' 2' 4' 8' 1/8" = 1'-0"



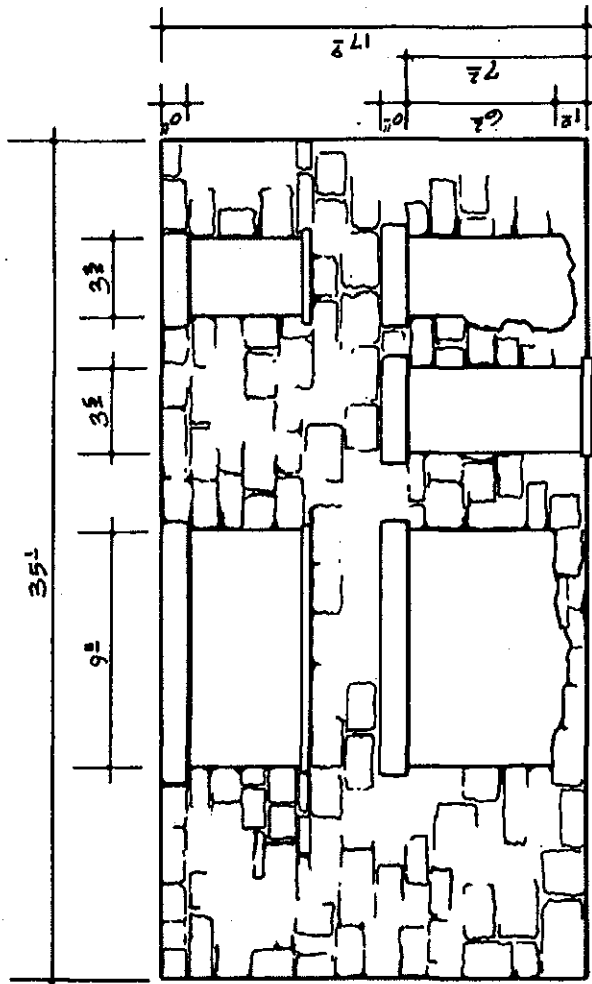
# SOUTH ELEVATION

LIBERTY FUEL MINING OFFICE  
 SPRING CANYON, CARBON CO., UTAH  
 HAER NO. UT-52  
 DRAWN BY: ELIZABETH ROSENBERG, 9/87

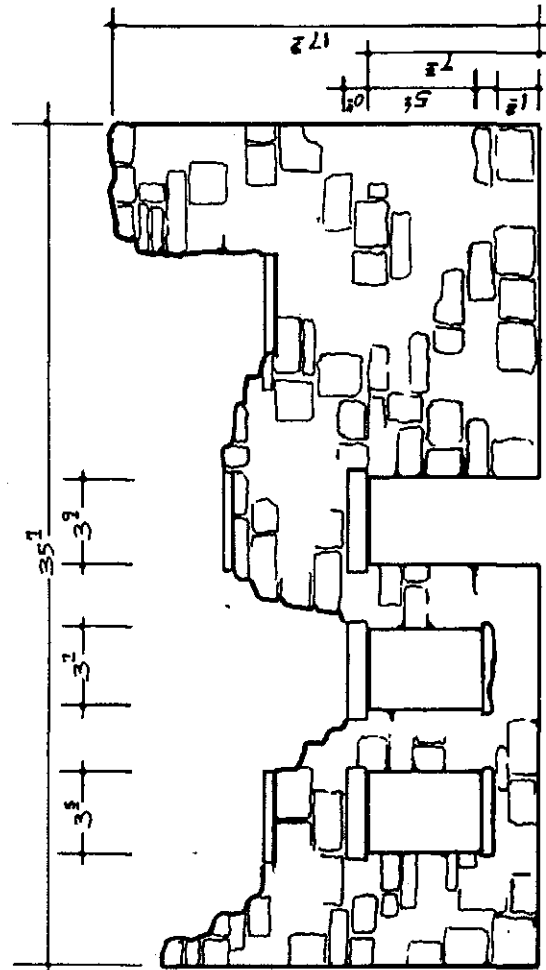


LIBERTY FUEL MINING OFFICE  
 SPRING CANYON, CARBON CO., UTAH  
 HAER NO. UT-52  
 DRAWN BY: ELIZABETH ROSENBERG, 9/87

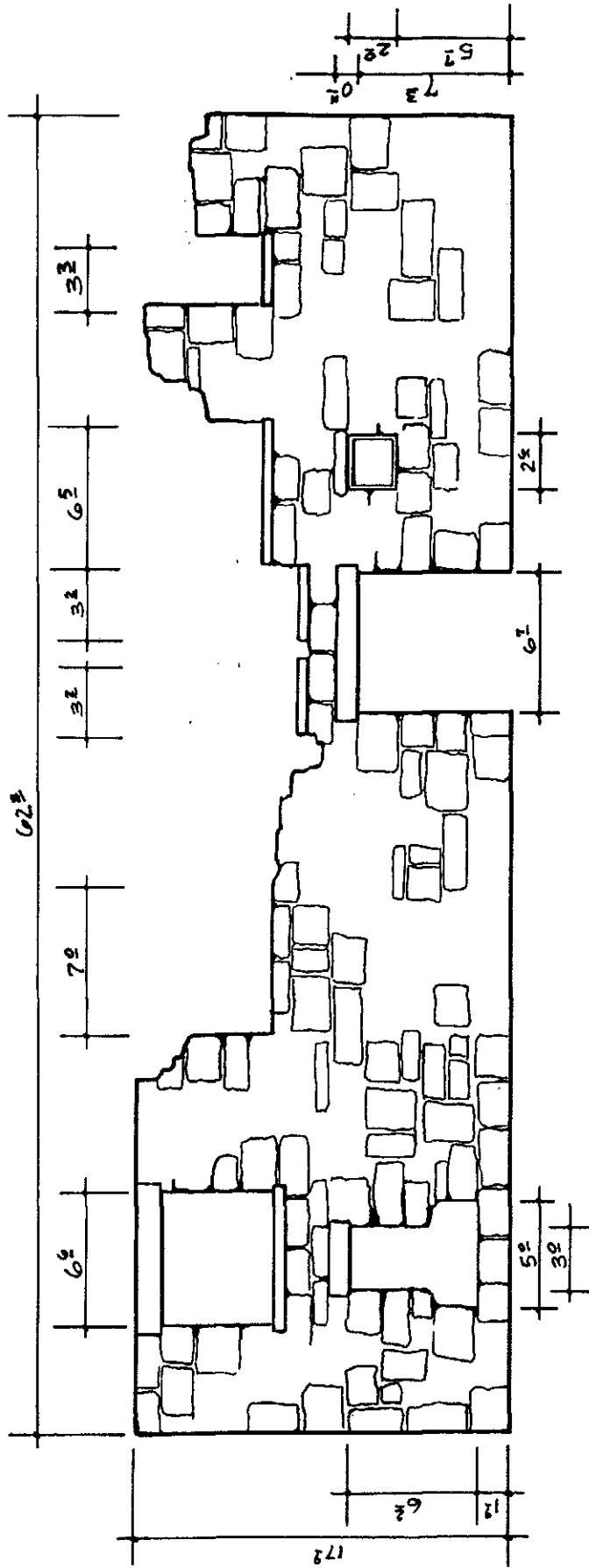
0 1' 2' 4' 8' 1/8" = 1'-0"



EAST ELEVATION



WEST ELEVATION



NORTH ELEVATION

LIBERTY FUEL MINING OFFICE  
 SPRING CANYON, CARBON CO., UTAH  
 HAER NO. UT-52  
 DRAWN BY: ELIZABETH ROSENBERG, 9/187

